DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 301 276 JC 880 580

AUTHOR Goldsmith, Marc; Robertson, Ann
TITLE Mitchell College: Word Processing within the Freshman English Curriculum.
INSTITUTION Mitchell Coll., New London, Conn.
PUB DATE 30 Jun 88
NOTE 18p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Computer Oriented Programs; Computer Software; Microcomputers; Private Colleges; Program Descriptions; Program Development; Revision (Written Composition); Student Attitudes; Teacher Attitudes; Two Year Colleges; *Word Processing; *Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

Since spring 1987, Mitchell College has included a computer laboratory component in its basic writing curriculum to teach students word processing skills. The development of the program posed a number of challenges: (1) introducing word processing to all students without revising the curriculum; (2) designing a computer facility that could serve as a teaching classroom; (3) selecting suitable software; (4) ensuring security for machines and software; (5) scheduling; and (6) meeting student and faculty needs. In peak semesters, between 400 and 500 students in basic English courses learn simple word processing functions at the computer lab in three one-hour orientation sessions. After orientation, students are encouraged or assigned to revise their papers and essays in the lab. The word processing component of the composition courses supports skills development in several ways; e.g., correcting is faster and "cleaner"; errors in syntax, logic, and emphasis are easier to visualize on the screen; spell-checking programs help reduce anxiety about writing; and revision assignments can be individualized to each student. In general, students and faculty have responded positively to the computer laboratory. Students feel that the computer makes the writing process interesting and less time-consuming, and some believe it has improved the quality of their writing. Faculty have willingly attending computer workshops and are increasingly involved in the orientation sessions. The program description includes a list of hardware and software available at the computer lab, a diagram of the layout of the facility, and a student handout for the orientation to word processing. (AJL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED301276

MITCHELL COLLEGE: WORD PROCESSING WITHIN THE FRESHMAN ENGLISH CURRICULUM

by

Marc Goldsmith
and
Ann Robertson

Mitchell College

June 30, 1988

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. Goldsmith

A. Robertson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

JC 880 580

SUMMARY OF COMPUTER WRITING PROGRAM AT MITCHELL COLLEGE

I. Overview

In November 1986 the Director of Academic Computing overseeing Mitchell College's Prime minicomputer lab, won approval from the Dean of the College, the President and, subsequently, the Board of Trustees to establish a microcomputer lab facility. By spring 1987, a word processing lab component was introduced into the basic writing curriculum.

Earnest determination and strong support from administration and faculty has been essential. Other key ingredients for integrating word processing within the freshman English curriculum have included a carefully designed lab facility, committee selected software, close cooperation between academic computing and writing departments, (e.g., scheduling of classes), staff training, (e.g., the use of faculty/staff workshops), structured written labs for student reference, and active ongoing communication.

II. Purpose

Our goal is twofold: First, students should learn to edit and revise on a microcomputer. By doing so, students will be able to practice writing in an efficient and memorable way. Second, by introducing as many students as possible, as early as possible, to the workings of a sophisticated microcomputer word processing system (a) a majority of students will become familiar with the lab equipment and procedures, making it easier for instructors in different disciplines to use the lab to enhance their course offerings (or simply to require that papers be typed [word processed]), and (b) a significant number of

our students will acquire the personal and career benefits that come from being familiar with microcomputer word processing.

III. Detailed Description of Program

See the attached manuscript which has been accepted for publication by the National Project on Computers and College Writing at the City University of New York with permission to publish elsewhere.

SUBMITTED TO
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER
(ERIC)

Clearinghouse of Junior Colleges
8118 Math-Sciences Building
Los Angeles, California 90024

on

Mitchell College: Word Processing Within the Freshman English Curriculum
Title

by

Marc Goldsmith, Head, English/Language/Fine Arts Department
Name

and

Ann Robertson, Director of Academic Computing
Name

Mitchell College
Affiliation

437 Pequot Avenue
Address

New London, Connecticut 06320
City State Zip

203-443-2811
Telephone Number

June 30, 1988
Date

MITCHELL COLLEGE: WORD PROCESSING WITHIN THE FRESHMAN ENGLISH CURRICULUM

I. History

Mitchell College is an independent, private, non-profit, two-year college for men and women serving resident and community students since 1938. The College offers a wide range of courses in the humanities, as well as in business and technical areas, to approximately five hundred and thirty full-time day students and an equal number of Continuing Education students.

Mitchell continues to be forward thinking in its academic programs and formats. This is evidenced by the introduction of a new microcomputer lab facility for academic departments and the introduction of word processing in the freshman English curriculum.

The introduction of word processing into the freshman writing curriculum began in November 1986 when the Director of Academic Computing, overseeing the existing Prime minicomputer lab, won approval from the Dean of the College, the President and, subsequently, the Board of Trustees to establish a microcomputer lab facility. Approval was sought in part because of the need within the business, engineering and math programs to take advantage of the unprecedented advances in the capability of microcomputers. But equally important was the rationale that all students should be able to use a microcomputer. It was thought that the place to start would be with word processing, a useful skill relevant to all students across the disciplines.

Putting the program together posed a number of challenges:

1. Introducing word processing en masse without disturbing the curriculum presented a problem. Creating a word processing course required of all students offered one solution. But imposing a new skills course with extra credits on an already tight academic curriculum raised problems of its own. The solution has been for the Department of Academic Computing and the Department of English/Language/Fine Arts to collaborate on redesigning a portion of the introductory writing courses, so that they now accommodate a word processing component: Since most students take the introductory courses (EL100--Review English, or EL101--Expository Writing), and since the classes are usually taken in a student's first semester, introducing individuals in these courses to word processing provides computer lab and word processing exposure to the most number of students at the earliest possible time. In addition, using word processing allows instructors and students to explore teaching and learning with computers and to bring the benefits of computer produced writing into their composition classes. Finally, because EL100 and EL101 are established courses, the overall curriculum is not disturbed.

2. Another concern was the problem of site design. (See Appendix A for a site layout plan.) The micro lab was carefully researched and designed after several members of the college administration and faculty visited various computer facilities. Paul Waldron, Head of Engineering and Physical Science at Mitchell, and Bruce Lawson, Manager of Computing Services at the Hartford Graduate Center, were particularly helpful. The result is a spacious layout that can serve as a full teaching classroom and significantly enhance classroom instruction. The four computer rows, for example, face the instructor's master workstation in a symmetrical arrangement providing direct eye contact with each student. The center or master aisle has a large screen projection system with a marker board on one wall and an overhead projector on the opposite wall. A large bulletin board is also prominently displayed. The teacher thus has a traditional classroom and yet is at the center of the workstations. The room, moreover, is appropriately trenched for proper positioning of cabling and outlets, which are out of the way beneath table level. The design of the room further allows for networking of the computers in the future. Also of note is the large screen color projection system which allows instructors to show on the large screen whatever is taking place on the instructor's screen. Additionally, a video networking system for color monitors, purchased at a relatively modest price, has been added. With this Link video system, instructors are able to view student screens at the master workstation; they are also able to send the master screen to student screens and to switch a student screen to the screens of other students. Moreover, any screen may also be viewed with the large screen projector.

To further maintain an effective classroom environment, the lab is amply equipped yet not overcrowded. To strike a balance between the ideal and the practical, there are no more than two students per machine during class sessions. For this reason, the micro lab has fourteen student stations and one instructor station at present. Four more computer stations will be installed for a total of eighteen student stations. Many of our writing classes are small enough so that we can place one student at each machine. We do have larger classes, however, that can approach 25-28 students. In such classes we seat two students per machine. (We are now

working to reduce class size in these larger sections to approach the one student/one machine ideal.)

3. Another problem was selecting a suitable software package. For this, the Director of Academic Computing formed a representative committee of seven persons from a cross section of academic and administrative departments. Each committee member presented and evaluated a different package. The two packages deemed most appropriate for the Mitchell program were then submitted to students for their evaluation. The software program finally selected was the full version of WordPerfect. It was thought that this full version program is sophisticated yet sufficiently easy to use and that it best represents the type of software students are likely to encounter in their careers or at other colleges and universities.

4. Another problem was security for machines and software. Aside from the obvious precautions any prudent person would take to secure a room, a Watchdog Security program was installed on each machine to protect the operating system as well as the application software. Also, each department had customized menus written for it, thus ensuring that a user can get into an application without detailed computer knowledge. Students are also asked to sign a pledge to safeguard equipment and software.

5. The problem of scheduling was resolved by opening the lab seven days a week with 25-30 hours of open lab time in addition to class time. To avoid confusion, the English/Language/Fine Arts department head and the Director of Academic Computing arrange a schedule of orientation sessions: during the first few weeks of the semester, instructors meet with their class in the computer lab for two or three sessions totaling three hours.

6. The most important consideration was, of course, the response of students and instructors. Problems here were keeping students focused on the task, helping students by making reference materials and disks readily available, and encouraging and supporting faculty. Assuring the availability of reference materials was easy. Reference books such as dictionaries, grammar and research handbooks and a WordPerfect handbook were placed on a table in the lab for easy reference. Each keyboard was supplied with a template clearly showing how to operate important functions. The college bookstore agreed to maintain a supply of disks and WordPerfect materials.

Problems expressed by faculty concerned the loss of valuable class time teaching word processing rather than writing; and faculty were also concerned about the time involved for them to learn about the software and hardware. These problems were eased by the introduction of extended and abbreviated faculty workshops conducted by a word processing instructor several times throughout the year. A word processing instructor was also engaged to instruct the writing class orientation sessions with the teacher present to assist by maintaining order and helping to work with students on the lesson at hand. Detailed labs (see Appendix B for a sample) have also been written by the English/Language/Fine Arts department head and the Director of Academic Computing. These highly structured labs are designed

to guarantee that students will learn word processing skills for the purpose of revising their writing with an editor's eye for correctness, clarity, style, unity and coherence. Finally, trained part-time lab assistants, many of them students, are required to complete a faculty/staff workshop in WordPerfect and are on duty during open lab time to assist in any way they can.

II. Mitchell's Approach to Word Processing and Writing

The basic writing courses in the English/Language/Fine Arts department employ process oriented writing instruction. In general, students have responded well to this kind of instruction, being especially interested in working on the initial stages--the thinking, planning and rough draft stages. One problem, however, has been that students resist the final step in the process--editing to assure that paragraphs are coherent and that sentences are clear, correct, concise and emphatic.

One important benefit of including wordprocessing instruction in our basic writing classes is that the computer allows student and teacher to concentrate in an efficient and memorable way on revisions. That is, they can deal better with editing tasks and the skills required for these tasks.

III. Student Enrollment

As already noted, students in basic English (EL100--Review English, and EL101--Expository Writing) are required to learn the elementary function of WordPerfect. This involves 400-500 students in peak semesters. It should also be noted that all Introduction to Data Processing classes include a word processing unit, as well. Thus, at any one time, a large percentage of the student body is involved in word processing instruction.

IV. Computer Writing Classes: Content and Procedures

For purposes of instruction, the following format is in effect:

1. Each course includes three hours of computer orientation sessions per semester.

2. In lab 1, students learn to format a disk, log in and out and perform basic editing operations on a short paragraph which they enter on their disk. In lab 2, students are shown how to retrieve documents and are given a follow-up paragraph related to the first; they are asked to enter the paragraph and improve the wording according to specific instructions: additional wordprocessing features are also covered. In lab 3 (Appendix B), students are required to compose a third paragraph from a given set of randomly arranged sentences; this paragraph must be completely integrated with the preceding two paragraphs in tone and focus. To do this, students must combine, reword and rearrange sentences; they must create transitions, add detail and make other modifications; students are then asked to spellcheck and print the final document.

3. After each lab, students are asked to return during open lab time to polish, redo, or repeat the lab involved.

4. Instructors collect and evaluate printouts and supply students with feedback on the quality of their writing and editing efforts.

5. After these orientation sessions, instructors are encouraged to assign at least one more revision exercise of any kind (change passive voice to active voice, eliminate weak verbs, create sentence variety, eliminate deadwood, supply coherence, etc.) to be done in open lab and turned in for a grade.

6. Students are encouraged to write and revise at least half of their essays and paragraphs in the computer lab throughout the semester.

7. Students are also encouraged to meet with instructors in the lab during open hours for office conferences and further instruction.

We have found that it is best to use the following guidelines with the above format:

1. If some students must work two to a computer during orientation sessions, each student should split the work 50/50.

2. If an exercise contains misspellings or sentence blunders and punctuation errors, the instructor should supply a disk with the exercise on it so the student does not have to type in errors. (The student can then call up the exercise, edit it and print it for the instructor without reinforcing bad writing habits that might be picked up if students type in

errors. When the exercise is complete, students may transfer the results onto their disk for study.)

3. Students who miss class should make up the lab in open lab time with the help of a lab assistant.

V. Hardware/Software

Following is a list of hardware and software relevant to our writing program:

Hardware:

15	Zenith Z-248-84 microcomputers with 1-40Mb hard disk, 1-360K floppy drive, 1-1.2Mb floppy drive, 1 Mb RAM, 2 serial ports, 1 parallel port, graphics board (EGA/CGA Standard)
15	Mitsubishi XC 1410 color monitors
15	Irwin 445-AT-external (40Mb) tape interface cards (4 Workstations to be added fall 1988)
4	Irwin 445-AT-external tape drives
1	NEC P7 dot matrix printer with bidirectional tractor feed
8	NEC P6 dot matrix printers with bidirectional tractor feed
1	Sony VPH-1030QI video projector (ceiling mounted) with remote control, 96X96 mat screen
1	Link Video Network with hardware mouse (21 stations)
-	Appropriate switch boxes, cables, marker boards, overhead projector, and screen
-	All of the above equipment is secured to tables with spot anchors.
-	A dedicated and regulated power supply with surge protection is installed for both labs.

Software:

15	DOS 3.2
15	Watchdog Data Security Programs
15	Irwin/Bin Tape Systems
15	GW Basic
20	WordPerfect

VI. Effect of Program on Students and Faculty

The 1988 summer session marks the fifth consecutive semester of computer lab use within the basic writing program. The program runs more smoothly with each semester and has shown a steady increase in the use of the facility, especially for writing and revising papers. Informal discussions with students for the specific purpose of determining what they think of the program have helped us improve weaknesses and maintain strengths; such discussions have also convinced us that students in general approve of the program and see it as a way of making the writing process interesting and less time consuming. Some students also believe that using the computer to write and revise has improved the quality of their writing. Formal student evaluations in the data processing course indicate a positive attitude. It is also interesting--and gratifying--to note that many students express openly their appreciation to the college for encouraging and helping them to use the computers. Faculty have willingly attended faculty computer workshops, have endorsed the use of the detailed computer labs, have praised the word processing instructors and lab assistants and, perhaps most telling, have begun to increase their role in conducting orientation classes.

VII. Importance

Our sense is that everyone associated with this project--students, faculty, administration and staff--appreciates the importance of the word processing/writing program.

First, we believe that by using microcomputers the writing program can focus more purposefully on the transfer of knowledge about language mechanics, style and the composing process to the actual application of that knowledge to produce

better writing. The advantages, most of which are true of word processing in general, are many:

a. Correcting is faster and "cleaner" than when done by hand.
b. Errors and weaknesses, syntax, sentence logic and sentence emphasis are easier to visualize on the screen.
c. Spellcheck reduces the kind of anxiety that blocks writing for many students.
d. Students can try more possibilities, create more versions and can be encouraged to review and revise repeatedly.
e. Revision assignments can be tailored to fit individual students.
f. Students learn a valuable computer skill.
g. The printout is easier to read for student and instructor.
h. "Lost copies" are prevented because students have a backup copy on their disks.
i. Students remember the details of their revisions; they are more aware of what they did and why they did it.
j. Students invest more time in revision and come to care more about cleaning up and styling their work during the final phase of process writing instruction.

Second, by introducing as many students as possible, as early as possible, to the workings of a sophisticated microcomputer word processing system two advantages are gained: (1) a majority of students become familiar with the lab equipment and procedures, making it easier for instructors in different areas to use the lab to enhance their course offerings (or simply to require that papers be typed [word processed]), and (2) the majority of our students are assured of acquiring at minimum the personal and career benefits that come from being familiar with microcomputer word processing.

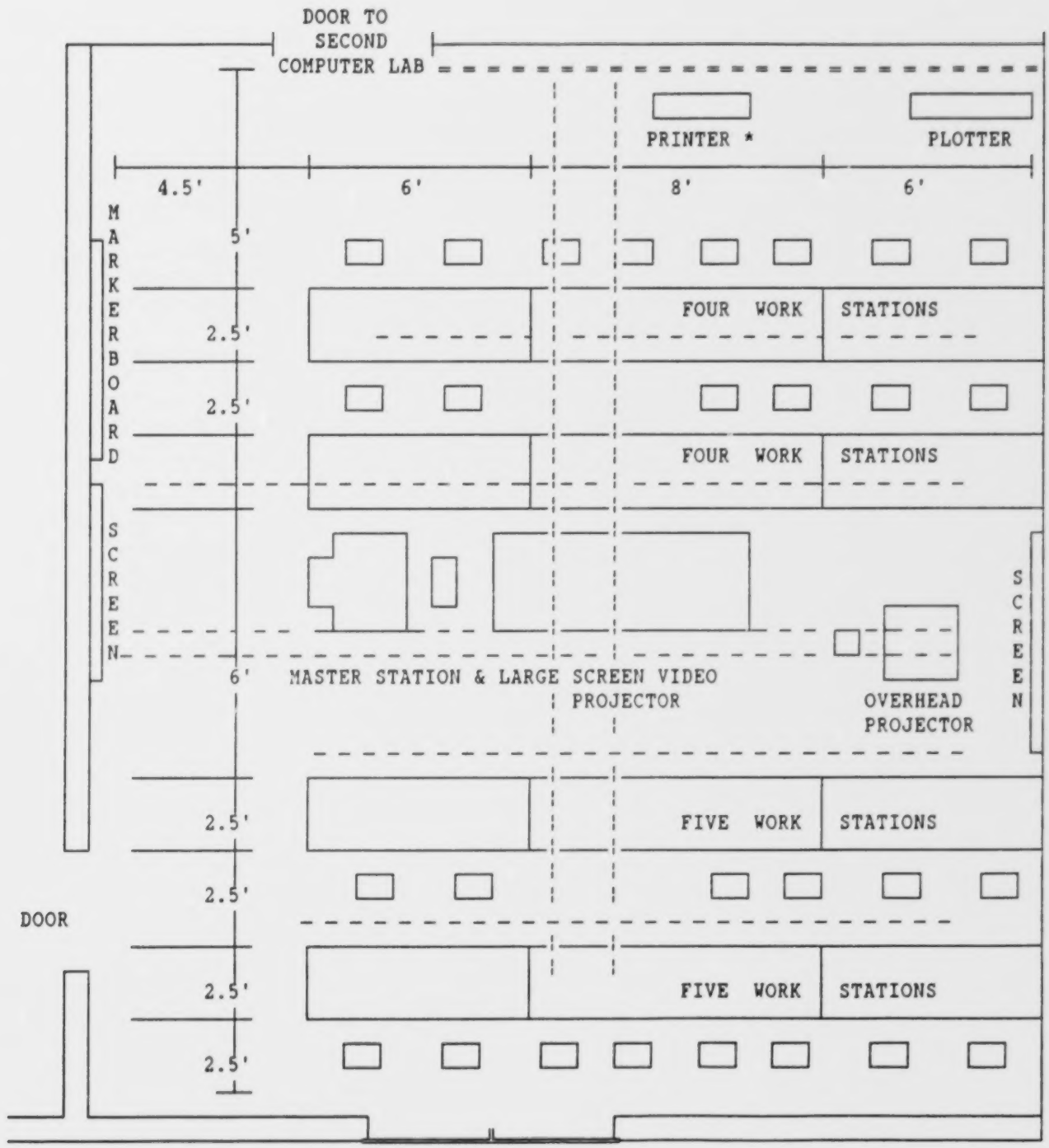
VIII. Summary

Begun in the spring of 1987, the computer lab component of the basic writing program at Mitchell has continued through five semesters. The program is still evolving, undergoing changes based on faculty and student feedback and experience in general.

While earnest determination is important, strong support from administration and faculty is essential. At Mitchell we were especially fortunate to receive the full endorsement and support of Dean David Harvey, President Robert C. Weller (retired August 1987) and President Bruce Swinburne. Further key ingredients for successfully integrating word processing within the freshman English curriculum include a carefully designed lab, committee selected software, close cooperation between academic computing and writing departments, flexibility (e.g., scheduling of classes), staff training (e.g., the use of faculty/staff workshops), structured written labs that may be used for reference, and active ongoing communication.

MICROCOMPUTER LAB
SITE DIAGRAM

APPENDIX A



- - - - - - - - ELECTRICAL

* 1987 - 1988

6-28-88/PW

Introduction to WordPerfect

WP LAB3-AR/MG
2/4/88

Computer Laboratory Project

Word Processing Lab 3

I. Retrieving a Document

1. Check to see that the computer is turned on. Press the Caps Lock button. Log in to your area by entering your user ID, password, and project ID. (Do not insert your diskette yet.)

2. Access the WordPerfect program from the WordPerfect menu.

3. Place your diskette in drive A and close the drive door. Select the "RUN WORDPERFECT" option.

4. Press function key F5 - List Files. After "DIR A:*.*" appears on the bottom of the screen, press the return key. Using the arrow keys, find the name of the file to be retrieved. Note the options at the bottom of the screen. Type "1" to retrieve the designated document.

Note: If the exact name of the document is known, the retrieve function - Shift F10 - may be used directly.

II. Checking on Spelling

Check on spelling: With the Ctrl (control) key down, press the F2 function key. Wait a minute for the various options to appear at the bottom of the screen. Choose an option, usually 3 (document). Then read the prompts carefully. Option 2 skips over highlighted (reverse video) words that WordPerfect does not recognize; 4 allows for editing from the keyboard.

Note that the Speller lists alternate spellings for each word not found in its dictionary. If you wish to replace your incorrectly spelled word with one from this list, type in the appropriate letter.

III. Revising a Document (Continued)

Move the cursor to the bottom of your document and use the numbered statements below as a guideline for devising a final paragraph. Integrate the paragraph with the two preceding paragraphs: keep the same tone; also, as in the other paragraphs, keep the focus on the writer's relationship with the reader. You will have to combine, reword and rearrange the sentences, creating transitions, adding detail and making other modifications as necessary. Hint: Begin with sentence four (4) and work from there.

1. Writers can use an automatic printer to produce legible, presentable manuscripts with ease.

2. In short, because they are so efficient, word processors simplify the writing process and give writers a welcome edge in their struggle to accommodate the reader.

3. Writers can correct errors and revise and refine problem areas with the touch of a finger.

4. It is not surprising, then, that writers are excited about the power of the word processor, a device that helps writers control words for the benefit of their audience.

5. Writers can check spelling automatically and can easily spot other types of errors and weaknesses which tend to be more obvious when viewed on a screen.

6. Writers who fail to use a word processor for the sake of their readers will only be failing themselves.

7. Writers can easily save documents on diskettes for convenient reference should they wish to produce amended versions.

IV. Checking on Spelling

Check spelling again: With the Ctrl (control) key down, press the F2 function key. Wait a minute for the various options to appear at the bottom of the screen. Choose an option, usually 3 (document). Then read the prompts carefully. Option 2 skips over highlighted (reverse video) words that WordPerfect does not recognize; 4 allows for editing from the keyboard.

Note that the Speller lists alternate spellings for each word not found in its dictionary. If you wish to replace your incorrectly spelled word with one from this list, type in the appropriate letter.

V. Saving a Revised Document

Save your revised document: Press the F10 function key. Note the "Document to be Saved: A:\Text.XXX" (XXX:your initials) prompt. Press return. In answer to the question "Replace A:TEXT:XXX? (Y/N) N", type "Y"; the document is then saved. WordPerfect will return you to the editing session.

VI. Printing your Document

Note: You may wish to turn off right justification (an even right margin) before printing your document. To do this: Move the cursor to the top of the document; press the Ctrl key and the F8 function key. At this point the Print Format menu appears. Type "3" to turn off right justification. Press the Return key.

Print your text: Hold down the Shift key and press the F7 key. Notice the options at the bottom of the page. Type "1". (Be sure the printer is on, the power and SLCT (select) lights are on, and the switch box setting is proper.)

VII. Exiting WordPerfect and the System

Exit WordPerfect: Press F7. The prompt will say "Save Document?" (Y/N) Y"; enter "N" since the edited document has been saved above. In answer to the

question "Exit WP? (Y/N) N", answer "Y". The WordPerfect submenu will now appear on your screen. Press the F10 function key to log out.

Assignment: Please return to the lab before your next class meeting to do the following:

(1) If you did not finish the lab, complete the exercise.
(2) If you did not use your own diskette, complete the entire lab using your own formatted diskette.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
JAN 13 1989